

Introduction

At the outset, it is best that we clearly understand what is meant when we talk about Missouri Community Betterment, The Missouri Community Betterment Program, The Missouri Community Betterment Educational Fund, Inc. and Community Betterment/Development.

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Missouri Community Betterment is a three-way partnership among the community, the state, and the private sector. The community or neighborhood is the arena where the action takes place; the state's Missouri Community Betterment Program is the tool used to help develop the potential of Missouri's communities; and The Missouri Community Betterment Educational Fund, Inc., (the private sector) provides funds for education, promotion, community awards and general program support.

The Missouri Community Betterment Program (MCB) is a state program housed in the Department of Economic Development and designed to help Missouri communities enhance their quality of life through overall community development, planning and implementation. The MCB Program accomplishes this mission primarily by lending technical assistance to communities; by officially recognizing the participating communities and neighborhoods; and by awarding those that excel in the program.

The Missouri Community Betterment Educational Fund, Inc. (MCBEF) is a private, not-for-profit corporation made up of businesses, public utilities, trade organizations, communities and individuals. MCBEF is a sponsor organization for The Missouri Community Betterment Program and fulfills its purpose by raising, receiving and disbursing funds in support of the program. MCBEF also serves an advisory role to the program.

Community Betterment/Development

Community betterment and community development are synonymous terms used interchangeably in this brochure. Community betterment/development is anything and everything done in the community to make it a better place to live. This includes everything from human development to economic development, from services and facilities to infrastructure, etc.

Take a minute or so to think of a few things that make a community a good place to live. It takes good people, housing, schools, churches, medical facilities, water and sewer systems, fire and police protection, parks and recreation facilities, clean environment, cultural events, job opportunities, programs to secure jobs (economic development), streets, strong local government...the list could go on. The MCB Program is a tool to help accomplish this betterment/development.

Community Development Process

Community betterment is not something that just happens; people make it happen. Everyone in the community has a role to play. Community betterment will involve both young and old, both professional and volunteer; it will involve everyone in the community.

Community betterment takes place through a process that most of us follow by habit in our everyday lives. The process is:

1. VISIONING and ASSESSMENT;
2. GOAL SETTING;
3. PLANNING;
4. EXECUTION OF PLANS OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS; and
5. EVALUATION.

For example, when you get up in the morning, you think of all the things that you would like to do that day (a vision), then what resources you have (assessment); you then have to figure out what you can do and will do (goal setting and prioritization); the next step is to make plans to get the job completed, using the resources that are available (planning); you then have to set out to accomplish those jobs (execution of plans or accomplishments).

Obviously, the process becomes more complex when it involves more people, various needs, wants and projects. In fact, the process can get so involved that the temptation is to by-pass it. If the process is by-passed, then more than likely, the desired result will not be achieved. In a healthy community where the process works, you can expect to find a community environment that would include most of the following characteristics:

**Community
betterment is
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Interest
Enthusiasm
Positive attitude
Pride
Awareness
Leadership
Overall community betterment organization
Communications
Coordination
Cooperation
Vision of the future
Long- and short-term planning
Use of assessment techniques
Maintenance
Wise use of resources (local, state, federal and others)
Evaluation
Celebration of accomplishments
Recognition of participants

Community betterment is achieved through the community development process.
The MCB Program is a tool in this process.

Involvement in Community Betterment

Communities rise and fall, depending upon how well community betterment is working. Find a community that has a thriving community betterment organization and an overall community betterment program and you will also find there a thriving, vibrant community.

Community Betterment is at its best when every one in the community does his or her part. This principle is basic to overall community betterment. "His or her part" means doing the things for which he or she is responsible as a private citizen, as a professional, and a volunteer. As private citizens we all have responsibilities: how we live our lives by principles, morals, and other values reflect on the community. As professionals: how well we do our jobs, as teachers, healthcare professionals, public servants, business people, carpenters, plumbers, or any other profession will impact greatly the community. As volunteers: how we participate in volunteer organizations, programs and projects will make a big difference in the community. Again, think in terms of the areas mentioned previously: "good people, housing, schools...."and how these things are accomplished.

In reality, most if not all, communities are involved in community betterment, but in many cases not to the extent that they have made their communities all that they need to be, want to be, or can be. The challenge, therefore, is how to bring about more community betterment; how to get people to do what they are supposed to do for the community as private citizens, as professionals and as volunteers.

Community betterment takes place when people do what they should do. This implies teamwork. Teamwork in turn implies that the players communicate, coordinate and cooperate with each other. There should be communication, coordination and cooperation (CCC) among local government agencies, organizations, clubs and citizens-at-large. CCC need to be operative among city officials, the police and fire department personnel, health providers, school officials, parks and recreation directors, representatives of the churches, the chamber of commerce board, student council and youth groups' representatives, economic development leaders, civic club representatives,

etc. Ultimately, this list should include everyone in the community because these are the players on the team. They need to work together to win the game. This brings us back again to how to achieve this end of making a community all that it can be. It brings us back to the community development process. What do you want your community to be (vision); what the community has, needs, wants (assessment); what it can and will strive to achieve (goal setting); how it will achieve these goals (planning); and implementing the plans (accomplishments). The key to making the community development process effective is a well-formed overall community betterment organization, providing a forum where-by all the community can have input on any issue and where-by decisions can be made.

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The Components of the Overall Plan Organization

Communities are unique and thus vary in their community betterment organizations. The city government may be the organization in one community, while another may use the Chamber of Commerce; others may use the Lions Club, Rotary or Jaycees, while still others may take an even looser approach without any central organization.

While these approaches may meet with some success, in most cases they have a significant limitation; they seldom are representative of the whole community; their mission and agendas are specific to their organizations. People feel they do not belong, or are not equally represented, nor have an equal voice. A better approach is to form an overall community betterment organization open equally to everyone in the community.

There are many things to consider in forming an organization, but once the purpose and the functions of the organization are determined, other things like how to get started, membership, representation, by-laws, etc. will fall into place.

Following are some questions to ask and answer about your organization:

- Is it broad-based?
- Is membership open to all the community?
- Are other or all agencies, organizations and clubs represented?
- Does it have a mission statement?
- What are its functions?
- Is it primarily a coordinating or action/project organization or both?
- Does it have a set of by-laws?
- Is it incorporated or should it be?
- Does it have 501(c)(3) status, or should it have?
- Does it provide for leadership development?
- Does it provide for continuity?
- Has it developed a directory of resources in terms of other organizations, agencies, as well as, human resources of various kinds?

If your community does not currently have an MCB program, we encourage you to partner with other collaboratives that may be in your community such as CHART, community 2000, or Caring Communities. If you are a current MCB organization, we encourage these other collaboratives be included in your organization.

Assessment

Organization and now: Visioning & Assessment

Visioning and assessment are essential parts of the community development process. Once organized, they are where community development begins. Knowing what you want, what you need and what you have are necessary steps before you set your goals. On an individual or personal level, this process can be relatively simple, but on the community level, visioning and assessment are much more involved and complex because there are many areas that need to be assessed and therefore many agencies, organizations, groups, and individuals need to be involved.

Having a vision for your community is very important, because unless you know what you want your community to be, unless you can see what your community will look like in five and ten years from now, the goals that you set may not help you get where you want to be. But, it is sometimes very difficult to arrive at a common vision for the community--members of the community have different ideas and images of what they want and see for the community. Attitude surveys and town hall meetings using the nominal group process are some very good ways to arrive at a consensus. Time and care must be taken to arrive at a realistic vision; for a vision that is unattainable will lead to frustration, disappointment and loss of interest. An attainable vision leads to interest enthusiasm, involvement and celebration.

**MoCAP is a
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A broad-based overall community betterment organization with a long-term vision will need a comprehensive assessment. Attitude surveys and town hall meetings, among other techniques, will give some indication of what the community has, needs and wants; but a more accurate and detailed assessment will have to be done by the people in charge of the various agencies and programs. The Missouri Community Assessment Program (MoCAP) is a program designed specifically to assist communities in a comprehensive assessment. Communities considering a comprehensive assessment should look into the MoCAP. In any case, the community betterment organization must determine, according to its purposes, the scope of its assessment and how it is going to carry it out.

Goal Setting

Organization Visioning & Assessment and now: Goal Setting

The goals that the organization sets will in large part depend on the community's vision and the information gathered from the assessments. Many times communities want certain things but may not be able to accomplish them at the present because of lack of resources, or perhaps some other project is more urgent. Thus, prioritization is a part of goal setting.

There are various techniques which a community or organization can use to help them through this process. Attitude surveys and town hall meetings can help an organization arrive at the selection of the goals for the year or years. Other information such as feasibility studies and availability of resources should be factored into goal setting. Goals should be realistic and achievable lest the organization and its members lose faith and hope in themselves.

Another point to remember in overall community betterment is that while the CB organization is setting its goals, other particular agencies and organizations which are a part of the community are setting their goals. The goals of these organizations and agencies should fit into those of the overall community betterment organization; goals that bring the community closer and closer to its vision.

Planning & Implementation

Organization, Visioning & Assessment, Goal Setting and now: Planning & Implementation

Community planning, like assessment and goal setting, will of necessity take place at different levels and among different agencies, organizations, etc. For example, the community betterment organization may have as one of its goals to add three new ball-fields to the community's recreational program. The community betterment organization's planning will, in part, be to find the agency or volunteer group that can and will build the fields. The agency or volunteer group will then have to figure out a detailed plan of what is needed, when it will be started and when it should be finished.

The agency or group, in turn, may not have the expertise or experience to draw up the details, so they would have to seek further assistance to ensure that the plans were technically complete. Even so, there still may be other elements to make the plan complete. For example, a fund-raiser may be necessary to help pay for the project. This perhaps brings in another group and some added plans. So, just in this one example of building ball-fields the complexity and importance of planning is seen.

Planning for the community betterment organization may be general in nature: What is to be accomplished? What organized groups can be found to carry out the projects? What other resources might be needed? When are projects to be completed? The agencies or groups taking on the projects will then work out detailed plans, including an action plan. However, in some, perhaps many, cases where the community betterment organization takes on the implementation of projects, the organization itself will be responsible for the detailed action plan. In any case, an action plan that details the "who, what, how, where, and when" is critical to successful implementation of projects.

Evaluation

Organization, Visioning & Assessment, Goal Setting, Planning & Implementation and now: Evaluation

Community development is as long as life itself. It is not possible to hurry up and get everything finished so that there is nothing else left to do. Added to this fact is that change is a constant in life. It is therefore necessary that monitoring, evaluation and updating be a part of any organization, program and plan.

The community betterment organization like any other organization should evaluate its own performance. Is the vision clear? Did the assessment reveal not only the needs, but also the resources and assets? Are the goals leading to the vision? Are the goals reached? Are the goals reached on time? Are the accomplishments having the expected impact on the community? The long-term plan should be reviewed and updated to meet changes in the community. The organization should examine itself in terms of its purpose or mission, its functions, leadership and vision. Only through this sort of scrutiny can an organization, its programs and plans avoid becoming obsolete and thus irrelevant to the needs of the community.

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Importance of an Overall Community Betterment Program

Over the years, the State of Missouri has reaped many benefits from the MCB Program. Its impact on the quality of life, including the growth in economic development, almost defies measurement. But one can get some idea of the positive impact just by looking through the community project report books on display at the annual MCB conference.

The MCB Program is now even more important to communities. More and more federal and state programs, as well as other non-governmental programs, are looking at where they can best invest their money; a kind of viability test. They are looking at the needs of the community, but also at "What has the community done for its part? " "Does it have its act together?" Does the community have a strong organization, an overall program and plan in place so that it can maximize the benefits from outside assistance? These programs are looking to see if the community has a long-term plan, a strategic plan. An overall community betterment plan can give some assurance that outside assistance would have long-term effect. A broad-based MCB organization with an overall plan can provide this framework for outside assistance from other programs.

This "viability test" is not something entirely new, but rather one of emphasis. MCB communities on the whole have always received their share of outside assistance. It is only natural that an active, upbeat, positive-minded, energetic community will be more attractive than its opposite. There is, however, more emphasis in these times of tighter funding on the "viability test".

Participating in the MCB Awards Competition

Once a community has a community betterment organization and is involved in community development, it may enter the MCB Awards Competition. The Awards Program is designed to stimulate a positive, "can do," and "will do" attitude in the community.

If you need an awards entry form, or other MCB material, or if you have questions about the MCB program, contact your regional office or the central office in Jefferson City.

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